

**Testimony in support of**  
**H.B. No. 6856 AN ACT CONCERNING SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND OPIOID OVERDOSE**  
**PREVENTION**

**Public Health Committee**

**18 March 2015**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and members of Public Health Committee,

My name is Jeff Holland, I am a resident of New Canaan, and I am speaking on behalf of my local Regional Action Council, Communities 4 Action. I am here to give testimony in support of HB6856-

**AN ACT CONCERNING SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND OPIOID OVERDOSE PREVENTION**

As part of the Connecticut Prevention Network, our organization has been working statewide with our regional partners in a multi-strategy approach to combat the growing problem of prescription drug diversion and abuse, especially involving opioids. As reported by the CDC, overdose is now the leading cause of injury death. The Governor's bill provides necessary tools to address this public health epidemic. By reducing illicit access to opioids, reducing demand, and reducing harm, lives can be saved.

In 2010 we collaborated with the Department of Consumer Protection Drug Control Division to pilot a medication drop box collection program that is now statewide. This program ensures that household medications are disposed of responsibly, preventing potential misuse. We support, as is proposed, mandating the use of the Prescription Monitoring Program, as well as prescriber education, to help reduce the overprescribing of opioids, and also the implementation of programs like SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment) that help to ensure that individuals that have developed a dependence on these powerful medications are better identified and receive appropriate care.

However, even with these preventive strategies in place, there is still a need for harm reduction. During the last legislative session we worked as members of the Opioid Overdose Prevention Workgroup to ensure that anyone administering an opioid antagonist to reverse a suspected overdose would have Good Samaritan protection. And although many first responders in our state now routinely carry Naloxone, the antidote for an opioid overdose, witnesses to an overdose may not, and are often reluctant to call 911. That is why we also support expanded access to Naloxone through pharmacy dispensing to those potentially at risk, as well as others who might be a witness to an overdose.

Pharmacists are in a unique position to help reduce opioid overdose deaths by furnishing Naloxone. In recent policy statements, both the American Pharmacy Association and National Association of Boards of Pharmacy stated support for the development and implementation of regulations that permit pharmacists to furnish reversal agents to prevent opioid-related deaths due to overdose. To that end, we ask that you support the Governor's substance abuse and opioid overdose prevention strategies as proposed in HB6856, and help to increase access to this safe, effective, lifesaving medication.